

Op-Ed

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OLDER AMERICANS MONTH CHAMPIONS INDEPENDENCE

By Angela Spain R.D.L.D.
(Body copy 484 words)

America's aging population reached a turning point in 2006. One of the nation's largest generations, the baby boomers, started turning 60. According to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, as many as 78 million people constitute the baby boom generation, and they stand to make an enormous contribution to the rich character and wisdom older adults offer to all of us. Baby boomers are among the millions of mid-life and older adults who are continuing to redefine how we age. We need to be ready for an aging population that's as multifaceted as any in our history.

This May, we will once again celebrate Older Americans Month. This year's theme, *Choices for Independence*, reflects the continued commitment of the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) and the Central District Health Department to help our nation prepare for a larger aging population, and to bolster the efforts of baby boomers and older adults to achieve healthy aging. Independence for adults as they age relies on a balance of important elements: empowerment in consumer choice; healthy lifestyles that emphasize nutrition, physical activity, prevention, and active participation in one's health care; and access to the tools necessary to make informed decisions. Combined, these elements help all adults maintain the dignity they deserve, providing more opportunities to live longer independently while contributing to communities they cherish.

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OLDER AMERICANS – ADD ONE

Our goal at Central District Health is to help seniors live long, healthy lives of independence and dignity. That's why we provide Senior Nutrition programs to those over 60 at dining centers in Ada and Elmore counties. And for those who are housebound we deliver hot meals through the Meals On Wheels program to more than 500 people a day. The Fit and Fall Proof classes held at area senior centers help prevent injuries that could result in seniors losing their independence. Knowledge is powerful and that is why we also offer cholesterol screenings, and prioritize the distribution of the flu vaccine for older citizens.

AoA supports the desire of older adults to live in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Central District Health is proud to be a part of this effort. We work knowing that the combination of independence and choice are essential to the pursuit of healthy aging. Our projects cover a range of issues important to older adults, including health care, diet and physical activity, transportation options, and housing. Among current projects is a large-scale effort to modernize the services provided under the Older Americans Act to ensure dynamic, efficient service that stays in step with the changing needs of our older citizens.

Central District Health is one of many organizations working with AoA to help older Americans remain vibrant in their communities. If you are seeking more information on how to help, or would like information for yourself or someone you care about, please call us at 208-375-5211 or visit us online at www.cdhd.idaho.gov.

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